

AU BOARD MEETING (ZOOM)
May 11, 2023

Attendees: Robert McKenna, John Hundrup, Al Christeleit, Joyce Stierlin, Jeff Life, Ronnie Shumaker, Karen Clifton, Steve Lawler, Gary Heindel, Toni Wiaderski, Dave Wilson, CL Gage

President McKenna called on the board members individually and asked them to share a little bit about themselves.

Al Christeleit, Executive Vice President – lives in Colorado and use to fly with the Grand Junction club.

Jeff Life, Northwest Zone Director – has served on the board as Northwest Zone Director, National Race Secretary and flies with the Columbia Basin Flyers and the Columbia Basin Combine. He resides in Wenatchee.

Joyce Stierlin, Pacific Mountain Zone Director – is east of Sacramento. She is currently the Pacific Mountain Zone Director. Joyce has participated in the sport for 40 years. Joyce has worked with the programmer for years to see EWINSPEED become a viable program.

CL Gage – Southwest Zone Director – is in north Texas. He is retired from the oil business. He has pigeons and horses.

Gary Heindel – Plains Zone Director – is from south of Green Bay, Wisconsin and has participated in the sport for 63 years. He is also the Race Secretary for the Midwest.

Dave Wilson – Lakes Zone Director – resides in Chardon, OH. He had pigeons for many years and then got out when his children were younger and has recently started racing again.

Ronnie Shumaker – Southeast Zone Director – is near Meridian, Mississippi. He is a retired educator. His club (Queen City) flies in the Deep South Concourse. There are about 50 lofts in the Concourse. He thoroughly enjoys the birds.

Toni Wiaderski – Northeast Zone Director is in Connecticut and has had pigeons for 47 years. He said he has attended a lot of AU conventions.

John Hundrup – President Ex-Officio, began with show birds in 2004 and became interested and active with racing homers. He is in southeast Washington in Clarkston. His club (Camas Prairie) flies with the Stateline Combine and the Easter Washington/Oregon Concourse.

Steve Lawler – Constitution & By-Laws Advisor has been involved with the AU for 50 years. He flies with the Empire Concourse with John Hundrup and Jeff Life. He reported he has fielded his first call pertaining to by-laws issues.

Steve provided a brief update pertaining to by-laws, specifically, as they relate to elections. He indicated that the committee had reviewed by-laws for inconsistencies and that he would like to present proposed changes for the board's review. An election will be held in 2024, and Steve noted it was important that the board review proposed changes so to be prepared and in agreement for the next election.

AI asked what changes he was referring to. Steve asked if AI wanted to hear those proposed changes. AI said no and that the election should be held as it was held last year. CL Gage said no, rather send ballots strictly by mail. CL went on to say that the AU has to make people vote.

CL suggested several times that if members don't submit ballots to vote, they should not be allowed to order bands.

Steve continued and pointed out that there is a conflict between by-laws 5.06 and 5.08. 5.06 says the Executive Director may send ballots as deemed appropriate. By-law 5.08 says if they are sent via USPS, they shall be sent first-class mail. Steve suggested the board review proposed changes so to be consistent and in keeping with the board's direction.

CL asked who the Executive Director works for. The Executive Director works for the board. CL said to tell the Executive Director to mail them first class and change the by-laws.

Steve noted that was exactly what he just suggested a few minutes ago. President McKenna agreed that it was a good idea to bring proposed changes to the board and that reform is needed by August 1 in order that we meet submitting to membership timely. Notice would need to be provided to members. The next opportunity would be in the July newsletter. Following that, the board would vote within 30 days to approve those changes. Then the election announcement may be made as it always is in the annual yearbook.

Steve acknowledged the work of the committee (Drew Lesofski, Don Lowe, Jim Greelis, Ronnie Shumaker and Herb Cartmell) as a fairly thorough review has already been made.

AI questioned Steve about why he has "old crew" on the committee. Steve told AI that to have two working committee members with some working knowledge and history is helpful. Steve added that the two "old crew" have background information on why by-laws are worded as they are. Steve also pointed out that he has two members on the committee that are completely new and will bring fresh perspective.

Dave Wilson said he has heard many complaints about the AU's lack of transparency and not bringing new people in. He said members want new blood. Dave said the AU cannot save the sport, but that it has to be done at the club level. He added that members are talking about transparency and members want change. He said when he looked around the room, he was surprised to see all the old board members. He said from years past one gets voted out and they get put on a committee. He said it is like whack the mole game.

AI reported that he has about 25 people that want to work on the Diversity Committee.

AI then said that he didn't want the existing investigators on the infraction committee. He said he wants to pick his own committee members. President McKenna told AI to make choices to present to the board for approval.

AI said he wanted to make a formal complaint and wanted the following to be posted (verbatim) in the minutes of this meeting. He read his complaint:

"John Hundrup should not be on the Board of Directors because he said he would quit his position as Ex-Officio and not serve on the board if he did not win the election. This was put in writing as an email to the Board in January 2022 and again in the Spring 2022 AU Update publication to the AU members.

The statement he made at the March 26, 2023, zoom meeting about "changing his mind" is not only unprofessional, but also unethical. It lacks honesty and integrity and shows a total lack of regard to the American Racing Pigeon Union membership that voted him out twice."

AI said that at a meeting in Utah, Vance stood up, was angry with Coletti and Coletti said he would quit. AI said that John asked for that in writing so he feels John should do what he put in writing.

John Hundrup told the board that he simply changed his mind and announced that to the board in March while he was still acting President. John went on to say that many people were lying.

CL then said that is the problem and that John should tell the truth.

John reiterated he was not going to name names of directors that were spreading misinformation. John said he would be happy to discuss with AI in person in July.

President McKenna said that the Diversity Committee is needed to bring people together. McKenna said he would like to see getting more ages involved and that AU members are needed to work and mentor. He added that ten board members can't do it all. Bob suggested each club needs ambassadors to work with new members.

Bob also mentioned members' responses to finders of lost birds and reiterated the importance of proper and timely response to protect the image and perception of the sport.

McKenna said going forward he would like the meetings to be orderly and that if meeting by zoom, the person wishing to speak raise their hand and wait to be recognized to speak. Bob asked that board members not speak over each other.

Ronnie Shumaker, Promotion Committee Chair, said he is talking with David Stephens (KY) and Jimmy Peters (GA) regarding promotion and videos. Both have professional experience with production. Ronnie asked that Zone Directors send him a list of names of individuals within their zones that might be interested in working with the promotion committee.

CL complained that membership was much higher 20 years ago. He argued that it was between 12,000 and 14,000. Karen told him that it was about 7900 in 1999 according to the computer program that was being used at the time.

Al asked how many members the AU has now. Karen reported that as of this date, there are 7005. The impact of Exotic Newcastle, several outbreaks of Avian Influenza over several years, restrictions imposed by state veterinarians, shipping restrictions and Covid have at times contributed to losing members. Karen said that membership has continued to slowly increase over the last couple of years.

Al argued that the number of members was higher before.

Dave Wilson said the AU can't do everything.

CL complained about the AU membership database. He said that club presidents or secretaries need to get accurate addresses to the AU.

CL said that the club presidents and secretaries should be sanctioned if they don't update addresses for their members. CL said that if a member orders bands and they don't give accurate address information, that member should be sanctioned and not receive their bands. CL said other organizations do that.

CL said that clubs should not be able to receive race results or bands if a form isn't filled out with accurate address information.

CL said that the Texas Center directory is inaccurate.

Ronnie Shumaker said that in his area, most clubs are small and have few volunteers. Ronnie said that he believed the AU should not be motivated to try to force people to do things.

CL continued to say that if no updated address information is received, then the clubs and members should not receive their bands.

Ronnie said that he could purchase bands from vendors if the AU didn't sell him bands.

CL said that the AU should no longer sell bands to vendors.

Ronnie said he appreciates the input, but that the board should stay on agenda.

CL again said that if secretaries don't send in updated information, then no bands should be sent to the club.

Al asked why bands are sold to vendors. Karen said it was mainly revenue. Al said the AU should give 50 bands away free and charge for 50 bands.

CL said people go around and buy bands without belonging to the AU.

Al said he thinks the AU will gain members if we stop selling bands to vendors.

Ronnie offered that small clubs purchase from vendors in smaller quantities.

Al said the AU would make more money by getting members to buy bands from the AU not vendors. He said if the AU sells bands cheaper, they will gain members.

President McKenna interjected that it is too late to change price for 2024 as those bands have been ordered and paid for. He suggested that if the board wants to discuss a price change for the future, then do so.

Bob added that he feels the AU needs to increase the number of junior members. He will demonstrate use of the junior clocking solution in person in July. McKenna emphasized that clubs need to identify members to work with juniors. Bob said that he has found that when working with junior members, you tend to gain the interest of siblings, parents, grandparents, etc.

Dave asked Bob if the AU has advertisements. Karen said we do have promotion brochures and advertise on various social media platforms. Al said he had used some brochures in the past that worked nicely. Karen added that Deone has created many event-specific brochures and pamphlets for members.

Al said the focus should be on the grandparents as they have the money to invest in the sport.

Deone added that we have third page brochures that allow for local clubs to insert local contact information.

Deone said she would send out samples to the directors. CL said a comment should be added to the brochure that would caution a potential new pigeon flyer to check with local ordinances to see if pigeons are allowed at the residence before spending time and money.

CL said there is an influx of immigrants in Dallas and Denton. AI said that is true in Minnesota and Florida.

President McKenna reported on the protest to be held in Sacramento. The protest is to encourage disallowing release of pigeons. Bob said he received notification of the protest via Facebook and that Joyce would be there to observe.

AI suggested that Drew or Greg attend.

Ronnie asked Joyce her opinion. Joyce indicated she would go and observe quietly.

President McKenna reminded the board that Deone would be retiring in July. Deone's replacement, Mary, is in training. She has a strong background in administration and office management.

AI asked if she has experience with pigeons. Karen said she has a good knowledge of animal husbandry due to family hobbies.

McKenna went on to discuss QR codes being on our bands. He said it would cost about a half cent to each band to add QR codes with one manufacturer and that we are waiting on a second quote from another manufacturer. Bob said the QR codes would lead a finder of a lost bird to the AU and potentially to the actual owner. Bob suggested that would help with perception and illustrate that as a group, pigeon fanciers are responsible.

CL said pigeon people give the sport a bad image. He said some are good about helping and some are not. He said he tells people to feed, water and then release found birds. He said he thinks a QR code is more money and harder.

CL then reiterated the AU should not be selling bands to vendors and that people buy fake bands.

Ronnie asked CL if names of those members using fake bands can be put on social media.

Bob McKenna said he had one infraction that needs to be reviewed. Don Moore investigated it. Bob sent it to AI to review. AI said it looks like it is done but he wants to confirm that all is settled.

Jeff Life has the numbers of the parties involved and will send that information to AI. Jeff said it started as a race rule issue and then escalated.

It will be voted on later.

The board entered executive session.

Upon exiting executive session, CL/AI to approve motion made to allow AI to call parties involved in the infraction discussed. Unanimous.

RS/GH to adjourn. Unanimous.